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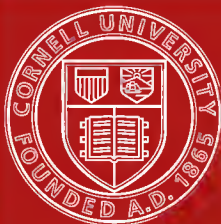
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A Venetian lover.



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A Venetian Lover

EDWARD KING.

A Venetian Lover

LONDON ·
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH & CO.
1, PATERNOSTER SQUARE, 1

1887

✓

MW

L'amor che muove il sole e l'altre stelle.

DANTE ALIGHIERI.



A VENETIAN LOVER.

We part to-morrow.

Now, ye pallid keys,
Wake from your mute and brooding ecstasy,
Wake into stormy passion, and proclaim
With moving eloquence my great despair !
Ye spirits troubled and invisible
That beat with restless wings the realms of air,

Ye voices wandering forlorn in space, —
Sweet echoes from celestial sweep of orbs
Unutterably distant—join, and make
One harmony to soften my soul's plaint ;
One song to sing my love and my regret :
One threnody for my poor heart that dies
Tonight, and knows no resurrection !

See !

The young moon pales before approaching dawn,
And soon the touch of opalescent morn
Shall thrill the dim horizon, till it glows
Rose red, as first her face glowed when I touched
My lips to hers !

The tender little face !

Oh, agony of parting !—emptiness
Of weary ways where I shall walk alone !
Sackcloth and ashes of my ruined days !
Oh, forehead that I may no more caress—

Arms that I may not feel !

What man is this
Who moans, and dreads the light, and knows that tears
Burn on his paling cheek ?

• Come ! music, come !
Awake ! arise ! let thy resounding chords
Refresh my faltering soul !

'Twas here we met :
Here in this ancient, quaint, delightful room
With painted ceilings and with sculptured walls —
Here, where the echoes of her footfalls seem
To haunt me, as I muse and mourn, and touch
The old piano's consecrated keys.
There was a passionate September moon
That cast its glory on the silent streets
Of gleaming water, on that night of nights
When from the gloomy gondola she stepped,
And like some vision that our Dante saw —

Tutta fulgente — through the palace door
Passed like a saint, with slow harmonious grace.
I stood above her, on the marble stair,
Upholding tremulously the huge lamp —
Half glad, half sad — to welcome to these halls
Where once my ancestors abode like kings,
'Mid treasures of the rifled Orient,
These strangers from beyond the Western Sea,
These opulent, sincere, and honest folk
Who fled their freakish climate, and with gold
Healed up my poverty and salved my pride.
And when I felt the beauty of her eyes,
And knew the rapture of her parted lips,
And saw the whiteness of her sweet low brow,
My heart beat loudly, and she heard its throbs,
As past me to the great hushed room she stole.

Then, as upon some thrilled midsummer morn
When our Venetian skies are jubilant,

A roseate hue springs in the white faint east
And burns to dazzling splendor, so there sprang
Into her liliated cheeks a sudden flame
That seemed to penetrate my very soul.
Oh, night of blessing !

How my being glowed !
How all the pent up current of my life
Flowed to her !

Never, in divinest dream,
Or maddest, most transcendent rhapsody,
Or in the rush and sweep of organ fugues,
Or 'mid enchanting and delirious sway
Of wild Tedescan waltzes full of love,
Never in waking or in sleeping bliss,
In pant of music or in peace of prayer
Bêfore San Marco's alabaster shrine,
Never upon the luminous lagoons,
When witching and ethereal moonlight wove

Vast spheres in which th' imagination swam,
Fearless, rejoicing in the Infinite,
Oh, never had I caught supremest joy,
And mounted heavenward on its sweeping wings
Until I stood beside her, and she looked
With timid, startled gaze upon me !

Stay,

Dear memory !

The tender little face !

Now came the father, bustling eager man,
Grey bearded, with harsh wrinkles on his brow,
Alert with care for her he cherished most.
I bent me to my duties as a host,
Here held a light, and here a curtain raised ;
To English tamed my unaccustomed tongue,
And told them how I learned their golden speech,

Rich with its grave sonorous emphasis,
Amid the mists of mighty London.

When

I knew them cloistered in their several rooms,
I felt a longing burn upon my brow,
Nor tried to check it. Down I sat, and mused,
While on a carven table, in a nook
Close by a balcony, that overhung
The sad dark water, old Anina spread
The simple supper — bread and meat and grapes ;
One wickered flask of red Chianti : cheer
Such as our narrow household rarely knew.
Oh ! but to see her for a moment more !
So ran my thought : and as I mused, she drew
Backward the tapestries that hid a door
Ornate with porphyries that Dandolo
Gave to my ancestors who fought with him
The day that Byzance fell, and fluttered forth,

A fairy thing of draperies and lace
And subtle perfumes that embalmed the air ;
Such odors as the great Doge Loredan
Brought with him from the spicy Cyprian isle ;
Or such as lingered in the rustling robes
Of Catherine Cornaro : scents like those
That turned the heads of our Venetian dames,
When, at the end of their historic cruise,
The beaked galleys home from Asia came,
Their labored sides distended with the stores
Of precious gums and liquids prest from flowers
Culled in the depths of dewy Syrian vales,
Or plucked upon the steep Armenian hills.

The soft light played upon her russet hair,
And frolicked on the diamond at her throat.
The picture was too beautiful ! I lost

My eyes in dream. I did not see her pass
A moment later; yet I think I rose
And murmured some dull courtesy. I heard
Her father clink his glass at table; knew
He sat at meat—a prosy modern man.
But she !

I saw her in a vision bright,
A fair Venetian of the golden time
When Venice was the mistress of the seas.
Beneath a satin canopy she sat,
Within a swiftly moving gondola
Bedecked with richest stuffs from Samarcand.
The scarlet dresses of her gondoliers,
The damask flags that fluttered from the roofs,
And all the gleaming train of darting boats,
Proclaimed her wedding day.

I saw her glide,
Clad in her silken robe of spotless white

Gemmed with its lavish rows of priceless pearls,
Across the marbles to the Doge's throne.
Musicians softly played on silver pipes,
And matrons stood behind her, while she bowed
Her gentle head.

Her hand was locked in mine ;
My kinsmen backed me, in their ruddy robes
With velvet stoles of black : patrician-wise
They held their heads erect. Then to the church
Magnificent we moved, a sparkling throng
Of plumed and jeweled cavaliers and dames,
Thro' living lanes of maidens passion-browed,
And scarred and limping veterans of wars,
And laughing workers from the arsenal.
And oh ! the sweetly smelling incense ! Oh,
The voices singing in the hidden choirs !
So passed the vision, and a fire crept in
About my heart and burned it.

I awoke,
And bit my paling lips, and then I felt
The father's cool commercial eye upon
Me ; and I straightway drew the screen
Of half apologetic courtesy across
My soul, and moving to the table spoke :
And while I spoke I thought the fair girl's eyes
Caught up my words, and knew my secret thought.
" Thin are the wines and meager is our store
Of dainties for your welcome." So I said.
" But these are idle and unfruitful days
For ancient Venice. Would that I might call
'The palmy Cinque Cento back again,
And set upon our lustrous southern sea
Whole argosies o'erburdened with the wealth
Of half a score of empires. For your joy
Would that I might this silent palace fill
With long departed splendors ; make its walls

With tanned and gilded leathers all aglow,
And light the angles of this alcove dim
With silken hangings starred with countless pearls ;
Here let the Lombard magic gleam anew
In mantles decorated with the forms
Of sirens, weird chimeras, airy loves ;
With golden roses strew the ceilings blue ;
With silver vases and with shining blades,
With cymbals, lutes and medals, heap the boards
Of richly carven tables. Copper lamps,
With winking crystals lavishly bedight,
From chiseled colored beams should gently swing,
And lanterns filled with mirrors should reflect
The gracious forms of Roman goddesses
Imprisoned in the faultless marble ; aye,
And you should sip the wine of Cyprus from
Transparent goblets of Muranian glass,
Poured out of rosy flagons softly chilled

.

In metal coolers o'er which artisans
In far Damascus had for weary years
Knit their swart brows.

Or when your spirits craved
To thread the storied and romantic past,
On parchments dainty with the pictured wealth
Of monkish fancy ; on the missals rare
Where priests their chaste imaginations fine
Had lavished in their soundless cloister nooks,
Your eyes might feast.

Your lives should daily walk
Abreast with beauty, from the dawning's blush,
Till blessed sleep came with the midnight calm
To press your eyelids down.

Then to your rest,
Through corridors where webs of costly hues
Were stretched o'er wainscoting yet costlier ;
And where the coffers painted with the deeds

Of mighty men of Venice in the wars
Of Egypt, Greece, remotest Palestine,
Were ranged in rows ; and o'er the pavements wide
Encrusted with the marbles of the East,
And past the dazzling windows flushed with shields
And coats of arms, contented should you go.
In oratories where the aureoles
Of imaged saints a heavenly brightness made,
Before the altars might you kneel at prayer ;
Then might you in luxurious couches dream ;
While in recesses gilded caryatids
Seemed thoughtfully to bend upon their toil
Lest they might wake you.

And within the courts
The softly flowing fountains' lullaby
Should through the tranquil night hours murmur on.
Would that I might with quick enchantment bring
For you, my Western guests, these marvels back—

These wonders of the city of the isles —
The isles engirdled by the weird lagoons.
Great Venice is but lost in reverie !
Forgive us if we cannot quite forget
Her fourteen centuries of glory ! ”

“ Stay ! ” —

Loud rang the father's quick imperious tones,
And on the table danced the jingling glass ;
While o'er the old man's face a ripple ran
Instinct with anger, which he strove to check,
And clumsily bemasked beneath a smile :
“ Sir, you will set our fancies all aglow,
And take the blush from Venice e'er we thread
Her mazy lanes of water. It is well :
You have your pride : the past was great and fair.
Yet all this catalogue of luxury
Stirs up a kind of protest in my blood.
I pray you, do not set me down a churl,

If I proclaim your jeweled ancestors
Improvident and thoughtless. Hardy men
Like those of early Venice might have kept
The empire of the seas.

Perhaps I err,—

Daughter, your lips are pale —

'Tis very late."

And so he rose and brushed aside the crumbs,
And tossed his napkin down.

I answered thus :

" Forgive me, sir. Your journey has been long ;
My house is yours. As for my ancestors,
Venice shall teach you in an hundred ways
To love them better. Sir, my servants wait
Upon the lady and yourself."

Then she

With one coy gesture turned her father's gaze
To where the pleading moonlight glorified

The ancient panes within the sculptured nooks.
"Prosaic man," she murmured, "dare you go
Bedward, while lovely Venice woos the moon?
Come, let us muse upon the balcony;
I think such perfect nights be rare in life."
He scowled, but followed her. With nervous hand
I swung the casement open, and we saw
Black-fronted palaces o'er which pale gleams
Went wandering serenely; lengths of wave
Across which shot belated gondolas,
With singing lovers 'neath their canopies.
Cool blew the wind that came in from the sea;
And as we stepped upon the balcony
Her hand touched mine, and I was thrilled with fire,
And in my new-born ecstasy was mute
Before th' unwitting girl, whose gaze was fixed
On the Guidecca in its midnight swoon.

I wonder if there be sad men who reach

The dusky gateway of our final house,
Not having known the painful joy of love :
If there be one who never knew the pang
And bliss of setting all his fiery soul
To contemplation of one woman's face,
Until for him that face outshone the sun,
And dimmed the chastened radiance of the moon,
And put new harmonies into the world ?
Oh, those first moments when the knowledge comes,
When the transforming passion fills the veins,
When the rhapsodic revelation thrills
The grateful heart—would that they might return !
That half-hour on my palace balcony
Was worth a lifetime of pale loveless hours.
The girl was happy in that moonlit time.
My inspiration rose to meet her mood,
Gaining new courage from her courtesy,
Which bade her ask me of the olden days :

And so I prated of I know not what —
Of Sansovino's marbles, and of feasts,
Of Tintoretto's ceilings all aglow
With pictured worship.

Then a cloud o'erset
The moon ; the father shivered, and we left
The balcony, and said "Good night" at last.

* * * * *

Next morning old Anina came betimes,
Shuffling suspiciously into the nook
Where 'mid my manuscripts and scores I sat
Wild-eyed, enchanted with my sudden love ;
And while she set before me chocolate
And fruits, she crooned in her falsetto voice
This legend in these words: I wrote them down
To please her, for she frowned.

*" In olden days,
A son of Venice, sailing to the north*

*On some great mission for the jealous State,
 Grew so enamored of the Northern Star
 That he forgot the risks of wind and tide,
 The patient oar and nervous sail forgot,
 And fixed his soul upon that beauteous star.
 While gazing skyward, he was cast away
 Upon a rocky shore, and held a slave
 By cunning enemies.*

*Long years had sped
 Ere he was rescued; and the man was mad,
 Rank mad, and babbled like a babe in arms.
 He said the glory of the star was hot,
 And slowly did consume him.*

*So he died
 A beggar : and the State forgot his name,"*

* * * * *

I smiled, and bade the ancient crone begone :
 " Be early at thy work, Anina, lest

Our northern visitors awake to find
Thee wanting in attention." Then she said :
" O little signor, by thy music bide,
Nor gaze too long upon the Northern Star."
But while she frowned anew, my heart leaped up,
For in the corridors I heard a voice —
A fresh young voice, a singing voice — that thrilled
My senses. Yet I bent above my toil,
And sought with hasty fingers to portray
By notes and lines the harmony that ran
Along my soul's chords.

Oh ! the morn was fair !

At ten I threw my toilsome pen aside,
Put on brave garments, smoothed my rumpled locks,
Sighed as I saw the silver in my hair —
And went in timid mood—irresolute,
To bid my guests good-morrow !

" Aye ! 'tis well ; "

The father said : “ my bed was over stocked
With antique draperies, and on my head
I feared a gilded caryatid might fall.
But not a ghost came to disturb my sleep,
And if I heard the squeaking of a mouse
I wager ’twas in dream. We like the place,
Serene and hoary with its memories.
But I am cursed with most unlucky news
Of tumbling stocks ; a dripping gondolier
Came from the consulate an hour ago
With this despatch : it does not marry well
With what you call your Cinque Cento calm.
Sir, I am modern, and I feel depressed
Among your storied stones.

What may we do
To fall into Venetian ways, and so
Court rest—much needed ?”

“ Good sir, breathe the air ;

Drink in the sunlight, float in gondolas,
Gaze on a picture, linger at a shrine ;
Note how the trustful pigeons downward fly
From the tall Campanile in the square ;
Watch the tanned mariners who flock about
The old Dogana ; view the arsenal ;
Sup on a fish, and sip a glass of wine,
And pass the late hours at the Opera :
Such is our life—we cannot offer more."

" Oh may the sunshine of this blessed place
Smooth out the wrinkles on your troubled brow."
So said the girl, as to her father's side
She stole, and placed a white hand on his head.
In closely fitting garb of neutral grey
Her slender form was clothed : her face was bright,
Her eyes were mutinous : joy danced within
The dimples in her cheeks. But when her gaze

Met mine, a hasty sorrow came and went
Across the summer heaven of her brow,
As goes a light breeze thro' a garden fair
Ruffling the flowers.

The tender little face !

That night the father bade me to his room.
“ Sir, dine with us ; 'tis fit in your own house
You should preside at table. We have heard
Much talk of you today. My countrymen
Who linger here—idling their days away,
Playing with painted sunsets—say you're wise
In music, and can make an English song
Catch a new glory from Italian art.
I've heard the sunburnt fishers on our coast,
Trolling for spoil outside the Golden Gate,
Chant many a pretty trifle ; but I knew

No word of what they meant.

Sir, we will stay
Snug in the palace, for the wind blows cool
Tonight, and my old bones are querulous."

We dined in state. Anina spread the board
With heirloom treasures, silver, gold, and glass—
I had not seen them since my boyhood hours.
Her old hands trembled as she placed my chair,
But she was keen, alert, and dignified ;
And at dessert she brought strange syrups dropt
In water, saying that my ancestors,
Who scourged the Orient an hundred years
Before our house declined, had served them thus,
And so the fashion had been handed down.
Then, frightened at herself, she slipped away
To light the candles in the music room.
Hither we passed.

The father in his chair
Half dozed, half listened, while I sang.

The girl
Nestled beside him, and her silken robe,
Rustling, made sweeter music to my ears
Than any song I knew.

Thus ran the lay ;
Here let me write it down ; I love to dwell
Upon the first faint words I sang to her :

I

Love, if Death prove but a dream,
And we seem,
Waking out of it, to grow
Dearer to each other far
Than we are
In this human life below,

II

Will our spirits dimly yearn,
As they burn
In Infinity on high,
For each old familiar grace
Of this place
Where we lingered but to die ?

III

Will our souls remember well
What befell
On that moonlit night in June —
Nature swooning into bliss,
And the kiss
That put heart-beats into tune ?

Now when I ceased I heard the father's tones,
Muffled and fretful, as one speaks in sleep :
“ 'Tis pretty sentiment ; this is the place
For cooing words and melancholy moods.
They do not stir our Anglo-Saxon hearts.
Is't not so, daughter ? ”

But she answered not.

Then I bethought me of a song I heard
Among the hills of Upper Austria,
When in my youth I took a pilgrimage
Thro' that strange land, for which I hold no hate,
But much stern enmity.

'Twas summer time,
And war was near. It was a woman sang —
Tears in her voice. I think I see her now —
White-lipped, protesting 'gainst the sacrilege
Of battle for the statesmen's fantasies ;
And one dull day in London, when I met
A poet who was hungry for a theme,
I gave him this heart-broken woman's wail,
Prisoned in dialect like gold in quartz,
And strung upon a quaint pathetic air ;
So he with English touch transformed it thus :

I

Oh Emperor ! Great Emperor !
Your cruel trumpets cry for war,
Ta ràntara, tàntara, tantarà !
The wheat is nodding in the sun,
The harvest work is just begun ;
But, mighty Emperor, I hear
A clash of sword, a clink of spear ;

Down thro' the fertile valley comes
An echo from the beaten drums, —
And up among the mountains ring
Voices of those who riding sing :

“ Now hy lo ho ! the trumpets blow !
The horses go in pacing row
Across the bending grasses !
Now hy lo ho ! the bugles blow !
And what care we for lasses ! ”

II

Oh Emperor ! Great Emperor !
Tell me what God made women for ?
Ta rântara, tântara, tantarà !
Was it to hear these trumpets play
To call our lovers to the fray ?

Was it to know the wind-blown rain
Falls on our wounded and our slain,
Where they lie heaped in foreign lands?
Was it in vain to stretch our hands
To those who shall return no more?
May we not curse the cannon's roar?

But hy lo ho! the trumpets blow!
The world must know you hate your foe,—
Your splendid army passes!
But hy lo ho! your bugles blow!
And what care you for lasses?

III

Oh, Emperor! Great Emperor!
Last night I had a visitor;
Ta rântarâ, tântara, tantarâ!

In sleep I heard the bugles scream,
My lover came to me in dream ;
In reddest blood his hands were dyed,
A gaping wound was in his side ;
My heart cried to him, and he said :
“ I am arisen from the dead !
O love ! forget your grief and pain,
And let me sing you this refrain :

Now hy lo ho ! the trumpets blow !
With laurels strew the field of woe
Where comrades brave are lying !
Then, hy lo ho ! the bugles blow !
And soldiers' trade is dying !”

“ I like a lusty voice,” the father cried :
“ Your song, sir, puts new mettle in my blood ;
I think I hear the moaning wind at play
Among my Californian pines and oaks
When thus you sing. 'Tis better than the sighs
And dainty lullabies of your hot South.

We, sir, live in the sunshine, like yourselves ;
Our fragrant land beside the western sea
Is bloomy, full of fruits and lustrous greens ;
But there's a vigor in the atmosphere
That makes our hearts beat to heroic tune.
Deep falls the snow along our mountain sides
In the capricious winter ; and wild rains
Grossen the torrents in the canyons vast,
And hurl themselves upon the thirsty sand.
Nature oft spurs us with ungentle hand
To utmost energy. We cannot sit
With fawning fingers to caress a lute,
Wooing unseen ideals with our lips :
And so we better like your latest song —
Albeit a mortal sadness freights its rhyme —
Than all your sweet Venetian barcaroles.”
“ Forgive me, father, but the first song fell
With truer music on this Southern air.”

So said the girl, and timidly uprose
And caught her laces round her.

Lo ! the moon
Came to caress her forehead virginal,
Putting to shame the candles' feeble glare.
I mutely gazed on her transfigured form,
And all the father's prating was forgot
In presence of her beauty.

From that night
I date the consecration of our love,
Although she gave no sign.

The days sped on,
While Venice wove its grave idyllic charm
About her soul. She took a little maid
From an old fisher's household, and these twain
Flitted thro' churches and thro' galleries
In the warm afternoons.

The father dozed,

Or read his crackling prints from over sea,
Or, with a patient protest on his face,
Unloosed his purse strings at his darling's will
In shops and painters' garrets.

And at night

I read them legends of historic days
Shrined by my poet friend in English verse :
Oh happy moments, will ye come no more ?

At last the longed for revelation came :
Let me muse on it.

, Would that I might die

Dreaming of that delirious night !

We read

Stories of Venice from this manuscript
Which lies before me as tonight I muse
Upon this anguish of my broken love.

My poet, wearied with unfruitful strife,
Died in a London hospital.

His will
Was sad and cynical as was his end :
“ Lo, friend, I give to thee my all — my verse !
Burn it or keep it, as thou wilt. Farewell.”

On that eventful night I read the tale
Of Loredan the Captain. Let me con
The pages over. How the letters spring
Instinct with action !

Truly poets live
Mysteriously after they are dead.—

CAPTAIN LOREDAN.

A.D. 1499.

I

Old Venice grappled with the Turk
In fourteen hundred ninety-nine ;
In truth it was a troubled work,
And ruddy were the seas as wine ;
For dread Bajazet set afloat

Against our fleet three hundred sail ;
And when he took a fishing boat,
Remorselessly his soldiers smote
Our helpless men, and poured their blood
Upon the Adriatic's flood.

His cruisers left a bloody trail.

* * * Our Admiral Grimani lay

In hesitating silence till

While yet irresolute, one day

He heard our flock of galleys thrill

With lusty, manly singing,

With clamor loud and long ;

And through his brain went ringing

This burden of the song :

“ Oh, where is Captain Loredan ?

For he will show the way !

Give us our Captain Loredan,

*And we will tempt the fray !
Now listen to this hoary man
Who leans upon his oar ;
He 'll tell you how brave Loredan
Slew twenty Turks and more !”*

So through the ships the story ran,
And o'er the seas the glory ran—
The story of
The glory of
Victorious great Loredan !

II

Grimani felt his cheeks grow white,
But not with fear — it was with rage ;
For he had sworn that in this fight
He'd blot proud Loredan's bright page.
“ What is this Captain Loredan

But officer at my command ?”
He cried. “ I’ll crush the daring man,
And lest he rush into the van
Of battle, newer fame to win,
I’ll fold my galley’s banners in,
And hug the comfortable land.”
So said he ; and he paced the deck
With jealous envy at his side,
While grim Bajazet wrought his wreck
Among our shipping far and wide.
But still came breezes bringing
Our galley oarsmen’s song ;
O’er purple waters flinging
Its protest against wrong.

*“ Oh, where is Captain Loredan ?
He’s here with us today !
Give us our Captain Loredan —*

*He will not bid us stay !
Now listen to this hoary man
Who leans upon his oar —
He 'll tell you how staunch Loredan
Has swept the waves before."*

So through the ships the story ran —
And o'er the seas the glory ran,
 The story of
 The glory of
Victorious great Loredan.

III

Nor day nor night Grimani stirred ;
The Turkish fleet, grown bold, drew near.
Our men, impatient, begged the word
For action, but Grimani's sneer
Froze up their hearts ; until one morn,

Out from the shimmering splendor broke
A blood-red dawn — for battle born ;
And haughtily, as if in scorn,
The Crescent's pennant fluttered high
Upon a mighty craft, close by,
Standing alone.

* * * * * Then, with one stroke
Of springing oars, a galley sped
Out from our midst : a second came
To join her — and like lightning fled
Beyond Grimani's cry of " Shame !
What are those oarsmen singing
Who my command disdain ? "
Back came the answer, ringing
In strange ecstatic strain—

*" This is the Captain Loredan ;
These be his galleys twain !*

*Lo ! here is Captain Loredan,
Whom fools cannot restrain !
Now listen to this hoary man
Who toils upon his oar ;
And win with Captain Loredan,—
Or Venice see no more ! ”*

So through the ships the story ran
And through all hearts the glory ran —
 The story of
 The glory of
Victorious great Loredan !

IV

The Turkish monster thrilled with life :
From her gigantic sides rained down
Huge missiles with destruction rife ;
And many a fighter fell to drown

Between the galleys' sides that shook
As if with frenzied laughter, when
The thunders of our cannon took
The yellow from the Turk's wild look,
And brought the ashes to his lips.
He could not fight these bellowing ships,
Nor war with these enchanted men
Who climbed along his galleon's rail ;
Who swam, and sank, and sprang in space,
Still fighting ; men who scorned to wail,
Tho' carved by swords ; and who with grace
Kept up their rhythmic singing
With dying lips that bled,
Sang—to the galleys clinging
With fingers battle-red—

*“ This is the Captain Loredan,
And we are all his men !*

*How like you Captain Loredan,
Who fights you one to ten?
Now listen to this hoary man,
Who still is at his oar;
And fly from Captain Loredan,
Or Byzance see no more!"*

So through the ships the story ran,
And o'er the seas the glory ran—

The story of

The glory of

Victorious great Loredan!

V

Swift sailing from the roseate East
Came kindred ships the Turks to aid.
And now the struggle's rage increased;

Wild flames broke forth to make afraid
The Moslems on their conquered craft.
Just as the banner of Saint Mark
Was raised upon her, fore and aft
Came a weird shudder; and abaft
The wretched Turks ran quakingly
To leap into the crimsoned sea.
Then came vast thunder.

* * * * * It was dark.

The ship, our splendid galleys, all
Went skyward—rending friends and foes,
As fire burst through the wooden wall
To stores of powder.

Then arose—
Out of the chaos bringing
A harmony complete—
A sound of voices singing
This chorus strong and sweet:

*"To die with Captain Loredan
Is joy enough for men!
Who would not die for Loredan,
No matter how or when?
Oh, listen to this hoary man
Who floats upon his oar:
He sings the death of Loredan
Who ne'er will lead us more!"*

To Venice so the story ran,
And through the world the glory ran:

 The story of
 The glory of
Victorious dead Loredan!

“ So died this stalwart man of many wars —
My ancestor — a valiant gentleman.”
My pride spoke thus :

Now she had read this tale
In grave tones musical as vesper chimes.

'Twas midnight.

In a corner dozed the maid,
Dreaming no doubt of Tonio whom she loved.
The father, pinioned to his wakeful couch

By angry illness, rang a warning bell
That jangled loudly in the corridor.
She rose, obedient to his petulance —
Bade me good night: I kissed her on her lips —
I' faith, 'twas natural ; I know not how
Or why I did it : and I held her, flushed
And cold by turns, a moment to my heart.
Then she awoke the maid, and stole away,
Nor cast a backward look.

First kiss of Love !

Life holds no other gift so dear as thine !

Thereafter all the days were fine.

O sweet

The tremulous sudden meeting of our hands,
The silent wedding of our pleading eyes,
The surge of hearts' blood when our garments touched !
Sweet to arise at morn from dreams of her :

Sweeter to long for her beloved face
Than fully to possess some grosser joy !
Oh sweet to sit beside her in the dark
While to Torcello rowed our gondolier,
Piercing with melodies the odorous night,
And writing rippling couplets with his oar
On the responsive water !

Sweet to feel

The round world throbbing into harmony
With the majestic measures of our bliss ;
O passionately and divinely sweet
To know that high enraptured love was ours ;
And thro' it half to guess Infinity
By that strange vast enlargement of the soul
Which comes with love :

To feel a scorn of Death,

Because there is one treasure richer far
Than Orient depths of sea agleam with pearl—

Than galleons laden with encrusted spoil
Of pillaged monasteries ; richer still
Than sacristies heaped with the crowns of kings,
And priceless gems of popes and cardinals,—
One treasure that this same ungracious death
May never ravish from us—

Love, that mocks
At fatal severance of our feeble breath,
And knows eternal youth beyond the tomb !

We part tomorrow, and for ever ! Stay,
O cruel dawn ! put off thy rosy march,
And let me woo remembrance in the dark !

Aye, moments when the sensuous joy of life,
The play of muscle and the heat of veins,
Delight of vision and content of nerve,
When all these glories of existence palled

Before the base and trenchant fear of death,
Ye can return no more.

Fled are the doubts—
Misshapen creatures from the hidden world —
Gone are the mockeries that nature brought
To sting me into madness.

Love has come
To make my days and nights one golden dream.
Rude Time and ruder Circumstance, jog on,
O fatal twain, in sullen pilgrimage ;
I will not listen to your weary tread,
I will not mark the turns of Fortune's wheel,
Nor hear the shouting in the market-place,
Nor tremble at the battle shock, nor blanch
At pestilence.

For what can harm me now ?
Do I not love, and am I not beloved ?
Why have I cried against my fate that bids

Forth from my arms the woman I adore ?
Upon their eager wings our spirits mount
To luminous and boundless fields of air,
To heights serene where earthly passion's thrill
Were profanation—!

Yet I shall regret,
Perchance, when Venice knows her face no more,
That wild night when she came into my arms
And clung an instant there—then kissed and fled
Ere I could give her kisses back again—
Fled past the startled waving tapestries,
And hid her coy confusion in her room.
I shall start up when I am here alone
And think I hear her footstep.

Coward heart

Wilt not be still !

The tender little face !

Oh death in life ! I cannot let her go !

Great souls that strive to rise upon their flight
To noblest course have strongest need of love.
They do but sublimate their passions. See,—
My English poet taught this in his verse,
While musing on the mighty Florentine
Who probed Eternity and mocked at space;
May not my heart find comfort in the rhyme?
So runs it in the ghostly manuscript :

I

Some say that Dante sang as one
Who wept while singing ; but I think
That when he trod the dreadful brink
Of Hell, and felt the vapors dim

Close round him, still his soul was glad
As birds are glad in shine of sun.
The great Italian knew he had
Love's mission to the hearts of men,
And so he wrote with cheerful pen,
Nor ever dreamed of being sad.

II

Stern was he, and his cheeks were pale,
And oft a tremulous throbbing note
From his clear poesy would float,
Like that of some lone nightingale
Who doth its mate's caresses miss,
Intent its passion to exhale
In varied singing ; but the bliss

Of his pure love struck higher strain,
Than momentary wail of pain,
And thrilled Inferno with its kiss.

III

Not even he, who set his feet
On ways no other mortal knew ;
Whose fine imagination flew
Heavenward, eternity to greet ;
Whose rapt poetic vision bent
Downward, where death and shadows meet —
Not even he, as forth he went,
The sad-browed Titan, to explore
That sea that never had a shore—
Dared to neglect Love's sacrament.

IV

The love he knew on earth below
Walked with him 'mid the choiring stars ;
Cheered him, as past the dismal bars
Of Death's dark portal, with a slow
Yet dauntless pace his course he took,
Intent the mysteries to know.
Nor ghost nor god his courage shook ;
And when his spirit seemed to swoon,
In splendor of supernal noon
On Beatricé would he look.

One day a shadow fell. The father came,
Frowning and pale with pains, not yet o'ercome
By all his daughter's studied loving care,
To pluck my sleeve and ask an interview :
" Sir, I do think you are a gentleman :
As one who bears a good historic name,
As one who lives a cleanly life, who writes
Fair music — as my host — nay as a man,
I do respect you. Sir, I will say more—

I like you heartily. Come ! there's my hand,
Now let me say a bitter, cruel thing :
You cannot wed my daughter.

She is pledged.

When she came here she knew it not.

Last night

I told her all. If I have been a fool,
It is too late my folly to correct."
And then he paused, and leaned against the wall,
And mopped his brow and eyed me with a look
That cut me like a keen wind.

Not a word

Came from my lips.

He frowned as if my thought
Sat on my brow defiant.

" In my land

We trust our maidens utterly : to lay
Suspicion on their movements were to doubt

Ourselves ; our love demands no guarantee.
Sir, I have seen you twain together read
From many books, have heard you sing sweet songs ;
Have let you go unwatched along the ways
At eve or morn ; have hired no servant's eye ;
To do a slavish spying. Now I think
The magic of your Venice, or your voice,
Or many things together, have entranced
My daughter's heart.

Mayhap the blame is mine :

I had forgot she is no more a child— ;
The years glide noiselessly.

I give you pain ? ”

I bowed, and took his trembling hand in mine.
Few words I spoke ; but they were touched with fire,
And though he scowled, he listened.

“ I do love

The gentle lady with a love as true

As soul that never knew a baleful scar
Of wrongful passion e'er can offer her ;
And with humility I here confess
That so my love is woven with my life,
So is it wound about my faithful heart
That nought but death could make its rapture cease ;
And when my breath is stilled, I do believe
'Twill linger on in some celestial form
More potent e'en than now."

We stood apart,

Eying each other like two men who meet
Upon a narrow precipice's brink,
Each one resolved to cast the other down
And to pass on to safety.

" Have you had
Confession from her lips ? " he asked, like one
Who dreads to hear the answer.

" Is it so ? "

On rushed the current of his heated speech.
“ Then you shall know, for yours are honest eyes,
And I would stand acquitted in your sight
Of any tyranny.

I had not dreamed
Love was so near. Sir, I will tell you all.

Sit in your nook while I walk to and fro ;
It cools the dancing fever in my blood.

I was a common man, and am so still ;
But I have lived a rude adventurous life.
Thrice have I stared disaster in the face,
And thrice the same hand saved me.

I have known

A love of friendship passing that of maid
Or mother.

Thirty years ago, I toiled,

Forlorn and desperate, across the sands
Of sun-scourged Arizona. From my home
Upon the rocky cold Atlantic coast,
Driven by stress of fortune, I had gone
Westward, alone, with nothing in my purse,
And sorrows in my heart.

A ragged train
Of hungry, but alert, courageous men
I found one day within a starveling grove
Hard by a gasping river, and I bound
My chances unto theirs.

We journeyed on,
Lured to a purple belt of mountains where
Nature had stored her treasures.

Ah, that march !
My bones ache when I think on't !
By our trail
The bronze Apache hovered. Every night

Was big with danger, and the heat by day
Drank up our blood. One torrid afternoon
When, crazed with thirst, I wandered from the men,
I saw a cooling lake before me rise
With grateful palm trees on its reedy banks,
And on the blue horizon skimmed a sail.
It was the ocean's ghost, the dread *mirage*,
The somber peril of the desert. On
And on I staggered, with my eyes ablaze,
Until I fell face downward.

What was death

In those wild days to men who saw her face
Peeping from every dusty clump of sage?
Sir, I had died forgotten on that waste,
But for one man, a new-found friend, who traced
My wavering steps, and with such sudden strength
As pioneers alone can muster, raised
My dying form, and packed me on his back

And bore me into camp.

We touched our goal :

We wrested gold and silver from the rocks,
And joy was with me, for that faithful man
Toiled ever at my side.

Ten years swept by.

We reached the city at the Golden Gate ;
Waxed rich in trade. I took a wife, and *she*,
My child, the idol of my heart, was born ;
And as the crown of my felicity,
The friend abode with us.

There came a time

When nature, maddened at our empire, rose
With fearful shocks to drive us from our homes;
The solid earth rebelled against our tread;
My roof-tree fell; my wife was crushed; I ran,
Clutching my infant daughter to my breast,
Desolate 'mid the ruins; and the crash

Of falling houses would have whelmed us both
Had not two strong arms borne us from the wreck :
They were the brave arms of my friend.

Once more

We toiled together, storing up new wealth.
We learned to play with millions ; in our hands
All prospered ; time's relentless current made
No warning noises in our heedless ears.
Pausing an instant in our upward course,
We saw my daughter grown to womanhood,
More beautiful than we had dared to hope,
And then we knew our beards were flecked with white.

Well, in those moments I grew over bold :
Men's minds were changed ; a fatal madness ran
Thro' every mart ; we played with paper stocks
As gamblers play at cards. My prudent friend
Shunned every glittering chance ; but I, poor fool,

Mocked at his wisdom : staked my ample hoard
Upon a giddy hazard. Then the storm
Broke forth : an hundred weighty names were wrecked,
And mine was tottering. Sir, unseen hands,
Ere I could check them, showered in my path
The wealth I needed, and I stood the strain,
Outrode the tempest, and retrieved my loss ;
They were the true hands of my earnest friend
That held me back from ruin !

Thrice he came
As sent by Fate, and thrice he bound me thus
In forfeit to him.

Then I took an oath
Upon my life and honor saved by him,
And thus I phrased it :

‘ Friend, my all is yours ;
Henceforth I hold it but in trust. I pledge
The whole to you, and by my love I swear

To give you whatsoever I possess
With glad alacrity, if aught of mine
Can bring you comfort or content.'

What less

Could man have done ?

A soft light filled his eyes.

' Give me the girl to wife ?

In loving you

I so have learned to love her, that I feel
My life enlinked most tenderly with hers.'
So said my friend. 'She yet has looked upon
No youth with favor. Tho' my face be old,
My heart is young. I ask it of your love,
Not of your fond and foolish gratitude :
Give me the maid to wife ? She does not look
Unkindly on me !'

So the girl was pledged.

And as I strive to be an honest man,

I swear I thought t'was honor, peace, delight
To which I pledged her.

 But she knew it not;—
Nor dreamed of any marriage. So we came
Eastward, across the fat lands and the sea,
And every day I whispered to myself—
My friend, my well-beloved friend, shall wed
My daughter, in some old fantastic town
Of Europe, whither he 'shall follow us ;
Then we will wander up and down the world,
A blessed trio, triply bound in love,
Until our hearts cry for our home again.

And now the charm of Venice, or your voice,
Or many things together — Sir, you know
All you must know : my friend comes on apace ;
We soon shall see him here ; the girl is pledged,
Inextricably pledged — the fault is mine ;

But all her life she has revered the man
Who comes to wed her ; after reverence love
Will follow. Let us dwell on this no more :
I pray you, set aside an idle dream ;
Still read your books and sing your pretty songs
Together, but unlearn your love for her ;
Think of it as a vision of the night,
For e'er this month is old we shall be gone
From Venice. Let me not disturb you, Sir,
With farther babble."

Then he bowed and went.

I have seen days so black with thick despair
No sun could cheer them.

This was such a day.

I sat with folded hands like some poor girl
Who reads a letter fallen into her lap,
And finds therein news of her lover's death

In brawl or sinking ship.

An idle dream !

With scornful emphasis he called it thus,—
My love—the lode-star of my life—my love,
The plank that held me buoyed above the waves !
Why should this grey-beard toy at will with souls
Welded and wedded for eternity ?
But how to stay his purpose ?

Would the girl
Accept the father's pledge, and so forswear
The love she gave me unsolicited,
Save by that love my eyes could not conceal ?
And this paternal insolence that bade
Me still to read and still to sing with her,
But to crush out my passion !

In my heart
Hot thoughts of vengeance leaped.

I stifled them,

I

Oh the happy afternoon,
When, upon the lone lagoon,
In a gondola we rode,
Thou and I !

How the merry sunshine glowed
In the spray that fled and flowed,
Rippled, tinkled, fell to die
On the water! Oh, the swoon
Of the earth and air and sky!

Oh, the cry
Of the swaying gondolier,
As he sang his toil to cheer!
Oh, the color on thy cheek!
Love! we did not try to speak;
We could only sigh.

II

Oh the midnight sweet with moon,
When across the pale lagoon

In the gondola we fled—

Thou and I.

How the melancholy dread

Of our parting bowed thy head :

How the moments seemed to fly !

Love, I cried, 'tis yet too soon,

And I dare not say good-bye !

Let us try

All our sorrow to forget :

But my coward eyes were wet.

Oh, the pallor on thy brow !

Love ! that night recalling now,

Are thine own eyes dry ?

I caught a fleeting courage from the song.
Methought she sang it not as one who took
With limp obedience her father's wish
And made it her's. And yet, I knew not why
She sang it. All that day I saw her not;
But, on the morrow, in San Marco's square,
I found her all be-ribboned and as bright
With laughter as a fairy ; not a hint
Of broken love was in her tripping tones.

"

Her maid was laden down with pictures, gems,
Mosaics — silly trifles — doubly paid
To grasping merchants ; and her father came
Behind the girl, a letter in his hand.
“ Good news,” he cried ; “ my friend, my dearest friend,
Him of the thirsty Arizonian waste,
Him of the earthquake—he—the helpful one,
Whose tale I told you, he will soon be here !
See, how he writes, the tyrant, as he talks — :

“ I come to Venice ; meet me at the ball
Given six nights hence in honor of a duke
In some old palace on the Grand Canal,
By that good Lady Lowknot, whom we met
At Monterey one summer. You are bid,
You and your daughter ; when cool midnight sounds
Amid the dancers at that merry ball,

There meet me—not before.

I wish it so.

Long years ago I dreamed on't. You and I,
Our girdles filled with good gold from the West,
Meeting in ancient Venice in a crowd
Of masqueraders—gravely as two Jews
On the Rialto! To your daughter say,
So ran the letter's sense to just this point
Where moving jealousy awoke my frown,
When, with a tremor in her voice, the girl
Cried to him, "Do not vex our kindly host
With this weak fancy, planned by télégraph
From far-off London, with romantic zest,
By idle lords for idle ladies' routs.
I like not meeting old friends in a throng
Of gaping dandies."

"Yet it shall be so,"

The father said.

But, as we slowly neared
The dark lane where I left them, we touched hands,
And, with her soul resplendent in her eyes,
She whispered dreamily,

“ I love my love :
So let my love love me that Time, nor Chance,
Nor Fate can e'er undo us.”

And I bowed

Gravely, and stole away to mask the bliss
That promised to unman me, by o'er loud
Discussion of new plays at Florian's,
Among the coffee sipping loungers.

Aye,

That night was beautiful! My soul was bathed
In perfect peace. I played my little part
Before her father with a grace that took
Its inspiration from the sweet girl's face.
There was a secret comfort in her gaze

That banished apprehension.

So we sang

And read once more together, eagerly,
Yet with a certain tenderness that cast
A holy light on our felicity.

The father bustled in and out, nor took
Apparent heed of our companionship;
And so we bolder grew, and talked of love,
And daintily philosophized on death,
The darksome future and the spirit life,
Bereavement's somber pang : and then I read
A legend from my poet's manuscript ;
The last, alas ! that I shall read to her :

THE PATRICIAN'S CHOICE.

I

How still the sweet youth lay upon his couch !
Tho' Death had touched his lovely body, none
Amid the weeping and the woe-struck throng
Of his patrician kindred owned despair ;

And thro' each brain there ran the murmurous thought—
The gentle boy, heir of the noble house,
The peer of princes, Fortune's chosen one,—
He cannot die — he is too young, too fair,
He is not dead : he lingers in a dream.

II

Outside the waters lapped the palace steps ;
Sweet Venice seemed to swoon away in bliss
Of sensuous summer sunset drowned in waves,
And tremulously sang the gondoliers
In underbreath the lines of Tasso's song.
The women on the balconies forgot
Their evening chatter, and the beggars had
A newer sorrow in their pleading tones,
For all the town was trembling for the boy.

III

How could the angel of the sepulchre
Sweep with his sable wing the brow untouched
By thrill of love, or passion's angry hand ;
Those lips inviolate of siren's kiss ;
The arm which never raised a brawling sword ?
Death should not dim the splendor of this pearl
Till it had gleamed for many proud decades
Upon Venetia's bosom ; so 'twas said
By peer and fisher in San Marco's square.

IV

Now slowly came the purple afterglow
To play upon the hundred marble walls,

And on the dresses of the waiting crowd ;
And its delirious magic put a joy
And lust for all the witchery of life
In every beating heart. With one accord
The people cried, " The boy, the peerless boy !
Death shall not taste the sweetness of his breath ;
Let's to the palace with the famous Saint."

V

Then solemnly unto the ancient church
In long procession went the eager folk ;
And there, within the prayerful atmosphere,
Before an agate shrine with jasper gemmed,
They found the Saint — a wondrous holy man,
On whom renown of miracles had cast

A halo of the supernatural—
And through the panting accents of their fear
He caught their wish—that he should save the youth.

VI

A little time he dwelt on bended knee :
His faint words, floating on the chastened air,
Whilom he prayed, brought to the troubled men
A confidence which thrilled their hearts.

At last

He rose, and underneath the gorgeous dome,
Ruddy with rich mosaics Byzantine,
He stood a moment in the fading light,
Clasping his hands, and gazing upward ; then
He girt his robe, and murmured :

“ Follow me ! ”

VII

So forth they went, exultant with the hope
That he who led them on would crown their wish :
And, as they left the church, the shadows fell
Upon the gleaming marbles of the East,
And on the dusky bronzes in the nooks,
And on the richly carven capitals
Of stately columns : while a gentle ray
Of fading daylight touched the pictured stones
And gilded horses at the portal's top.

VIII

Full hurriedly they swept across the square,
And through the labyrinthine avenues :
The bridges seemed to spring beneath their feet ;

The poling bargemen stopped to sign the cross
Upon their hairy bosoms, when they saw
This strange, mute, rapt, ecstatic throng of men
And this thick press of women, humid-eyed,
Led by the tall Saint with religious face,
The quaint ascetic Saint who talked with God.

IX

Down to the great canal in haste they came,
And to the palace on the farther bank
In darting gondolas the leaders pressed :
In silent rows the others waited.

Now

The mourning servitors before the Saint
Bowed, half affrighted, as the godly man

Passed like a vision through their shrinking ranks.
Straightway the many marble steps he climbed,
And to the dead youth's bed he softly stole.

X

The weeping mother at his feet fell down.
"Alas, the pity! Ah, the dread! The doom!
My gentle son is lost : is dead indeed!
Our love beguiled us, and we thought he lay
But in a trance. If Heaven hath sent thee here
'Tis not too late to work a miracle.
Oh, call him back to love and jocund life,
That he may crown his name with mighty deeds,
And warm me with the lustre of his eyes."

XI

So plead the mother, while around her pressed
Blonde maïds, with chestnut eyes and russet hair,
Who thought with murmured words to stay her grief.
But tenderly the Saint unloosed the hands
Which tugged, imploring, at his garment's hem,
And pushing past the sacramental priests
Whose gowns still smelled of the anointing oil,
And past the kneeling cavaliers and dames,
He fixed his eyes upon the dead youth's face.

XII

With shaking hand an ancient friar began
To light the tapers, and their solemn sheen

Fell on the gilded samite on the walls,
Upon the bent and striving caryatids,
On Grecian marble and on damask cloths,
On bronze and silver bells, and chandeliers ;
The golden cups and copper basins caught
A faint reflection of the sacred gleam ;
And painted coffers richly seemed to glow.

XIII

The carven couch whereon the dead boy lay
Was studded o'er with turquoise, gold, and pearl ;
Dense perfumes from the silken canopies
Filled all the air ; the satin coverlet
With golden fringes and with webs of lace
Was dazzling : but the Saint saw none of these :
He gazed upon the beautiful dead face

As if he longed to wake a new soul there,
And oft he whispered many an earnest prayer.

XIV

Death seemed abashed in such a splendid home.
The rich disorder of a noble's day
Betrayed its careless grandeur everywhere.
Here on the purple leather of a chair
A parchment poesy with silver clasp
Beside a crucifix of ivory
Was cast, and on the toilet table piled
Were costly treasures of Murano's isle,
And multicolored and enameled cups.

XV

Beyond an ebony incrustated door,
Swung open, was a panoplied array
Of halberds and of lances damascened,
Of bucklers, standards, trophies, banderoles ;
Of arms which Ghisi the great Mantuan
Had wrought with subtle skill ; the cupboards shone
With precious stones ; and in the niches lay
Majoliças and statuettes and gems,
The legacies of war-like ancestors.

XVI

A window in this princely armory
O'er-looked a garden in a spacious court ;
The scent of jasmine and of orange came

Deliciously adrift through colonnades
Of Oriental jasper : fountains sang
Their idylls to the statues on their brinks ;
Here life was poetry ; and here to die
Seemed dire misfortune, for the heart was wooed
To highest pleasures in this gracious place.

XVII

A mystical exalted purpose set
A halo on the grim Saint's wrinkled brow :
And when he spoke, his voice was that of one
Who feels an inspiration move his soul
And dare not disobey it.

Thus he said :

“ Dead one, who died when on life's threshold, wake !

Great Venice cannot think thee dead ; return
To all who love thee, and to love itself ;
To love, to fame, to glory, and to joy."

XVIII

Then came to pass a thing most wonderful :
The dead face softened, and the closèd eyes
Opened, and fixed their gaze upon the Saint.
Quick color tinged the yet unbearded cheek ;
The breath came, and the sweet boy lived again ;
Yet while his half appallèd mother yearned
With outstretched arms, the eyes seemed to regret
Some vast effulgence they had lately seen,
And longed once more to see without delay.

XIX

So now anew the Saint spoke in calm tones :
“ Beloved one, if in the deep unknown
Whence thou returnest, thou hast nothing seen
Sublimer far than all thou did'st possess
In this weak world of ours, then live again !
If thou dost hunger for this human sphere,
For pride of flesh, and pomp of court, and bliss
Of woman's love, come back to us, and live
With royal zest a long and happy time.

XX

“ But if the fields beyond be fairer far
Than any we in this dull space have known ;

If death be but the cloud behind which light
Unspeakable, and pleasures infinite,
Tranquilities sublime, divine repose,
Celestial ecstasy, await us—then
I charge thee, lovely boy, seal up thine eyes,
Put this poor world behind thee, and return
Into the glories that we know not of.”

XXI

The youth's eyes with a sudden rapture filled ;
Unutterable splendor clothed his brow ;
He raised his white right hand and put away
Life from him, as if it were poorer far,
Tho' it might linger thro' a century,
Than one half-glimpse of that eternity

Whence he returned a moment, at behest
Of this pure saint ; then, 'mid the golden fringe
And laces of the couch, he fell back—dead !

He would have bartered all Eternity
For one brief walk within some spicy wood
In fragrant twilight, hand in hand with her.
He would have spurned the rapt archangels' flight
Thro' spaceless regions of infinity,
Past whirl of worlds, beyond the planet's ken.
He would have set his footsteps on hoar earth,
And joyed in taking on humanity
Once more with all its dangers and its pains
To taste anew the sweetness of love's kiss."

I spoke thus, or I thought thus, for indeed
I know not if I voiced these many things,
Or if the girl could read them in my eyes.
But this I know, that through my soul they flashed
To hers, and found a faithful echo there.
Then she: "I think it would be hard to die,
Knowing the loved one lingers, strong with life ;

Hardest of all in Venice here to die ;
For this embodied and enchanted dream,
This gem of art in Nature's fairest frame,
Unique and dazzling, adds new joy to life,—
And to mine own, that here has found love's crown,
A sacred bliss that nought in the Beyond
Could compensate for loss of."

Then with tears
And sobs tumultuous, she pledged again
Her love to mine, and on her brow there sat
A holy tenderness.

Next morn her eyes
Were dulled with weeping, for the father's plan,
Ripened in haste to thwart our souls' desires,
Was curtly placed before her.

Ere the noon
Was hot, I saw a hateful gondola
Beating its prow against our palace steps,

And soon with boxes, pictures, trinkets, books,
'Twas filled by tripping servants.

O'er my face .

Dark shadows brooded, when the father came
To pay me gold and ask for a receipt
With cold commercial courtesy.

I signed

The paper that my hot eyes scarcely saw.
My fingers trembled, and my heart leaped up
With its Italian quickness.

Then the man,

With something like a quaver in his voice,
Wished me good things, and said my fame was sure,
If all the babble of Venetian lips
Were half confirmed : he hoped I would not dwell
On bygone episodes ; and so " Good day."
He sought a hostelry there to prepare
His daughter for her meeting with his friend ;

Bade me to come and see them, and was gone,
Like one who feared to tarry !

Ah ! my love !

I could not fly to take thee in mine arms,
And urge thy yielding heart to cry to mine
For instant rescue.

But I groped my way
Thro' the glad sunlight that oppressed mine eyes
With insolent rejoicing, down the stairs,
And stood beside thee, saying murmurous things
Conventional, nor daring once to look
On thine appealing beauty.

Thou wert gone !

I heard the ripple of the feathered oar,
And then Anina took me by the hand
And led me, unresisting, to my books.
I shuddered, then was calm.

Great grief is calm !

Day passed, and midnight came. I sat alone,
And lest my brain might tremble to the verge
Of madness, nervously I noted down
A flute-like brooding music for this song,
The voicing of some unknown poet's love.
She found it in a half-forgotten book,
And read it often to me. Once she made
This entry, in her racing girlish script,
And gave it to me as a talisman :
Ah, sweet the words, and sweeter for her gift !

I

Love in the night, love in the day,
Love that goes with me all the way,—
Strong love that will not let me stray,
That is the love for me.

II

Touch hands and lips and sail afar,
My love shall guide thee like a star;
Nor time nor space my love shall mar,
For I love only thee.

III

I know thy heart and soul are mine;
I know my will, my prayers are thine;
I need nor word nor written sign
To tell me what I know.

IV

Sometimes I hunger for thine eyes,
But then my faithful spirit flies

To thine, and tells thee of my sighs
And of my passion's glow.

V

Love brings me safely to thine arms,
Love shelters me from hundred harms,
Love keeps for ever new thy charms
And consecrates our bliss.

VI

Love in the dusk, love at the dawn ;
Sweet Love that placed our hearts in pawn,—
When down to death we two have gone
We still shall feel thy kiss !

Long hours of death in life passed slowly by.
One morn, Anina laid a perfumed note
Upon my table, and, with boding scowl
Of disapproval on her parchment face,
Said :

“ Here’s a bright ray from the Northern Star,
Prime full of mischief. Oh, beware on’t.”

Yet

Methought there was sly gladness in her eyes.
When on the marble floor her shuffling feet
Were heard no longer, to my lips I pressed
The missive ; then I broke the seal and read :

Love, I am not overbold;
Chide me not if I invite thee :
Love, I would not have thee hold
Me, thine own, as coy or cold :
Come ! thy presence shall delight me !
Meet me in the sun or storm,

Meet me in the solemn gleaming
Of the moonlight, pouring, streaming
Over waves that still are warm
From the day's impetuous kiss :
Meet me when thou wilt and where !
Say the word ; I'll follow gladly !
Oh ! thy hand in mine were bliss !
What for thee may I not dare ?
For my love, I love thee madly !

Rose upon my bosom worn,
Go to him and say I love him !
Perfumed tinted petals torn,
Whisper to him not to mourn ;
Naught on earth I prize above him !
'Tis my duty and my pride
Thus with faithful lips confessing

All the beauty and the blessing
Of our loves, no thought to hide
From the idol of my soul.
See him where I may and when,
At his look my heart beats faster :
Why should I my words control ?
He's the very pearl of men :
He's my life, my lord, my master !

Aye, there they were—the rose leaves, fluttering down.
I scarce had seen them in my fevered haste,
But now I caught and counted them, and pressed
A reverent kiss on each, and felt a light
Dawn on my brow.

No man can know his strength,—
Can feel the manhood sacred in his veins
Till he has known the deep religious faith
Of one true woman in his offered love ;
Till he has seen her set it like a gem
Upon her forehead, and in public gaze
Full proudly wear it.

Message of the rose,
What wealth of ecstasy didst thou bestow ?

So it befell that ere the day was old
My love had answered hers, and we were met
In that old Pantheon where sleep the men
Who once were dukes of Venice.

Thither came
In rustling robes the pacing Senators
To witness the entombment of a Doge,

After that mighty potentate had laid
His wand of office in Death's bony hand.
With heavy stones they walled the warriors in,—
The warriors, the stately men who wed
With legendary ring the fruitful sea—
The sea which once our conquering galleys swept.
There sleeps a Loredan, my ancestor.
There was his body from the palace borne
Followed by noblemen in scarlet clad,
By mourning brethren from the faithful schools,
With banners floating o'er them ;

magistrates,

Patricians, and the ruddy throng of those
Who win their food from the capricious wave.
Beside that tomb I met her, and we held
Our breaths, and seemed to hear the solemn bells
Of ancient Venice tolling as they tolled
When Loredan passed from the world of sound

Into the world of silence.

There we stood :

The mutual caresses of our gaze
Awoke a tremulous passion in our hearts :
I think our lips had been most eloquent
Of kisses, had the sacred place not kept
Our love in awe ; but words were slow to come.
The perfume of her garments, and the pale
And wistful beauty of her sweetest face
Stirred up a lawless might within my veins
Some brief time after, and I might have pled
For hasty flight together, for some rash
Romantic folly, later to repent
In dust and ashes : but a great faith came,
As sunshine sweeps resistless thro' a mist
To cheer the fisher when he gropes at sea.
At last she spoke :

“ Love, if I meet thee here

It is because the days are dull and dark
Without thee ; and I know not if thy soul
Cries unto mine, but every hour I hear
The music of thy voice, and yearn to see
Thy grave eyes fixed upon me.

Love, I know
Nor death nor space could stir my love to break
Our hearts asunder.

Thou and I are one.
But let me tell thee of a new distress
Which darkens the horizon of our joy :
Yet shall the mellow sunshine soon return."
I listened grimly, with a throbbing pain
Sharp at my temples, like a man who hears
His ships are lost at sea, his treasures sunk,
His boldest captains drowned.

Satiric Fate
Had thrown its net upon us.

Then she told

How quick disaster with tumultuous swoop
Had gulfed her father in the mire of woe.
His paper thousands in the crisping flame
Of some wild panic on the Golden Coast
Had vanished ; he had risen a beggared man
That day at dawn ; had come to her and read
The cruel message flashed across the sea,
And cursed his lot and wrung his empty hands.
His prudent friend had warned him—but in vain.
Once, when his fortune trembled in the surge
Where wrecks were plentiful, that friend had steered
His failing bark, and saved him.

But his zeal

To double wealth already vast enough
To found a colony, or freight a fleet,
Had marred his judgment.

And the friend would come,

Glad with high plans for their declining days,
To find his comrade stripped of all his gains
Save certain piteous hundreds—none too much
To hold them free from present misery.
So then the father, hot with grief and fear,
Anew had urged his daughter to accept
The pledged betrothal—had imposed his will,
Had wept and raged, and told her he must die
O'ercome with shame, were not his pledge fulfilled;
And were he dead, his spirit could not rest
Unless he knew her wedded to his friend.
Full timidly, yet with consummate grace
And modesty, these things she said.

I kissed

Her trembling hands, and bade her take my love—
My questionless devotion, nor to break
One link in duty's chain because of me
Or my poor heart, which, to its latest throb,

Was hers—all hers, nor ever would relax
Its loyalty.

 The tears were in her eyes,
But a proud color tingled in her cheeks.
She murmured, “Courage!”

 Then a prating group
Of tourists entered, and she stole away.
I felt like one who hears a melody
Melt into silence.

 And I left the place
Still-footed, lest perchance I might arouse
Some chiding ancestor to knit his brows,
And in the name of our old house, forbid
My farther brooding on this pain of love,
This exquisite delirium of love
And faith commingled.

 ’Twas an idle thought ;
So I took gondola, and seaward sped,

O'er subtly colored and translucent depths
Of tranquil water.

Thro' my brain this song,
And music for it,—went and came as goes
And comes the moonlight on a marble wall :

I

The old Doge sat in the Bucentaur
On great Ascension Day ;
And lightly the galley glided o'er
The sunlit watery way ;
The brawny rowers bent and rose,
And made the long keel thrill
With their oar blades' quick and steady blows,

Struck with united will.
Grey was the Doge and grand with age,
As good men often be ;
A saintly warrior and sage
In cloak of cramoisie :
And his pages twain held up his train
As he went to wed the sea.

II

He mused on the pirates Narentine
Whom Venice overcame ;
He gazed on the wave-engirdled line
Of towers tipped with flame.
The bishops sat on left and right
And blessed him with their smiles ;

And the bark with crimson all bedight,
 Sped out beyond the isles.
Uprose the Doge with solemn grace
 And stately courtesy ;
A holy light was on his face,
 He bent a reverent knee :
Then he stooped to fling o'er the side the ring,
 And to wed with it the sea.

III

Now round about the galley swept,
 And back to the Lido flew ;
Below blue waters foamed and crept ;
 Above the sky was blue.
In Santo Nicoló the mass

Harmoniously was sung;
The windows of historic glass
Abroad their glories flung.
Down went the nobles on their knees,
Alone the Doge stood he;
He bowed his head like one who sees
A visioned mystery
Of the men of old and of mighty mould
Who had won and wed the sea.

Meantime the gondola, with noiseless speed,
Stole out across a shimmering lagoon,
And paused upon the midmost water, where
We seemed afloat in mighty lengths of sky.
My' soul arose and trembled on its wings,
Seeking return into that Infinite
Which ne'er had been apparent to my sense
As now.

 All earthly passion fell away,
Ashamed and frightened at this quick approach

Of spiritual presence.

From the world

I seemed remote ; and palaces and men,
Ambition and the appetite for fame,
Were like forgotten dreams.

Great harmonies,

Oft vaguely, heard when o'er my blotted score
By night I labored, now were wondrous clear.
The spheres were moving to celestial tune ;
The rhythmic grandeur overtopped my thought ;
I could not measure, but was merged in, it.
Oh joy of death, if thus it doth unlock
The noble secrets of the universe !
And so in spiritual swoon I lay,
The oarsman near me thoughtful on his perch,
Till suddenly there came a subtle light,
And out of it there flashed the lovely face,
The russet hair, the diamond at the throat,

The sweet low brow.

The tender little face !

Ah ! not without thee, soul's twin, would I go
Were Paradise to open all its gates !

I roused the gondolier, and homeward went,
And to my lips, like some old melody,
With soft enchantment in its slumbrous notes,
Arose this little legend of true love.

It was a mild priest in a silken gown,
In some chaste chamber of the Vatican,
Who penned it first. A stately cardinal
Mouthed it full roundly in my willing ear
One day when walking on the Pincian hill ;
The sentiment was pretty, tho' profane,
He thought ; and so he bade me write it down :

In times of old there was a wicked friar,
Whose truant heart was filled with passion's fire
For a fair lady, who by chance did dwell
Hard by the poor man's monastery cell.
From day to day, as fortune would befriend,
The monk unto the lady used to send

A pious scroll with holy verses writ.
The lady marveled and her brows she knit,
But nothing of the Latin could she make,
Until one day love's hazard made her take
A careful scrutiny between each line,
And there she saw the friar's devotion shine.
Along the rich illumination ran
These words, hot from the heart of loving man :

*“ Oh Love ! my love is like a springing flame !
Oh Love ! God grant my love bring thee no shame !
Love ! let my love before thine honor kneel !
Love ! let sweet love my heart 'gainst longing steel !
Love ! let my constant soul no tempter know !
Love ! pray forgive me that I love thee so !
Love ! I will love thee till the years are done !
Love ! I will love thee when, beyond the sun,*

*Our spirits are commingled in the sweep
Of indistinguishable winds : will keep
Thy memory holy, if thou diest first :
Will love thee always, be thou blest or curst !
As thou wert mine before the world began —
So I am thine — thine only, for the span
Of this weak life, and for the time to be !
Slay me or hate me, Love — I must love thee ! ”*

And time crawls on !

Ah ! when will it be dawn ?

And when 'tis dawn, how shall my soul affront

The glaring eye of that intruding day

Which shall unmask my sorrow ?

Since we met

Beside that marble shrine where Loredan

Lies mouldering in his monumental calm,

I have not seen my love, nor had one word
To quell my spirit's fever.

Had she sent
A flower, a glove, a tress of hair, a book
Without a written line, I could have nursed
My wild impatience on it.

But her love,
Imprisoned in parental tyranny,
Hedged in by duty, frets and tugs in vain.
The friend has come.

At midnight at the ball
No doubt the tryst was kept.

What sound was that?
Beat, heart, your muffled drums, love's funeral march!
Go graveward, love! Hide e'er the dawning comes!
Down, down, i' th'earth; down, down! Anina! Here?
Did I not bid thee leave me to my grief?
Why smilest, crone?

Athwart thy withered lips
There crawls a mockery of my despair.
Leave me, I pray thee.

What! A letter? Give!
How my hands tremble! God! It is from her.
What say'st thou? 'Twas a masker in a cowl,—
O'er merry with champagne, whose gondola
Over the breeze-flushed water to our steps
Came hastily,— who brought it?

See—the lights
Burn dimly. Open yonder casement! Air!
Forgive me, good Anina!

Thanks, thanks! Go!

* * * * *

Alone, at last!

Sweet missive, hast thou brought
Life—life and love, or death—death and despair?

HER LETTER.

(HE READS.)

Mine own beloved one, my heart is hushed
And full of reverence which chastens bliss,
And dims my grateful eyes with sudden tears.
O read with patience these few startled words,
Penned nervously with hands that scarce obey

My eagerness to greet thee with great news.
Read, and give blessing to a soul that left
This morn our earth for far sublimer spheres,
And ere it fled the prison of our dull
Restrained humanity, made sacrifice
With glad devotion. Such a soul must shine
For ever in our tender memories
As shines a bright star in some summer night,
When tropic perfumes load the heated air.
I toy with words ! Forgive me !

Let the glow
And moving rapture of this radiant hour
Bear all the blame.

At twelve the tryst was kept.
My father, petulant and anxious-eyed,
Half vexed the toiling gondolier who tapped
His light craft's prow at Lady Lowknot's steps.
The palace portal was a blaze of lights ;

There was a scent of musk upon the breeze ;
And brawny servitors in scarlet coats,—
The only men unmasked — yawned wearily
As up the marble staircase tripped the throng—
Angels and demons, princes, monks and nuns,
Condottieri, Doges, Turks and Moors,
Ambassadors and Highnesses Serene ;
Grave Admirals and merry mountebanks,
Fantastic Punchinellos, Colombines,
Mad Harlequins and tottering Pantaloon ;
And tremulous with purpose, not with fear,
Disguised in vaporous lace and satin robes,
I seemed to float—nor feel my feet, and stood
At last beside the hostess.

Then I heard
My father's compliments give hasty place
To one quick cry of greeting, and I knew
He saw his friend, and hailed him with the joy

Born of his gratitude.

I dared not look ;
Before me rose thy face, and seemed to plead ;
The lights danced, and my heart sank slowly down.
But then I took my life into my hands,
And with supreme appeal to thy dear face
To guide me and inspire my trembling lips,
I did look up, and saw my father's friend,—
His form a trifle bent, his silver beard
Rippling below his mask ; his knotted hands,
That oft had been so prodigal for us,
Clenched nervously.

I knew him, tho' he wore
Thick flowing draperies, like a senator
Of Venice when she ruled an hundred coasts ;—
So forward stept, and placed my hand in his,
Nor fretted at my father's last appeals,
Half like faint menaces.

And now he took,
A bit confusedly, as one who treads
For the first time an unfamiliar wood,
His way across the marbles, where the masks
Already balanced in the stately dance,—
And held my hand as firmly as when once
Upon a Californian precipice
He led me safely through a blinding mist ;
And presently we stood within a niche
Where windows opening on a balcony
Let in a hint and murmur of the sea,
The sound of distant song, and plashing oars.

“ Here let us cast these silly baubles down,”
He said, and doffed his mask. I did the same.
A tremor overran his massive frame,

And o'er his furrowed cheeks an ashen grey
Stole slowly.

Then he said in broken voice :
“ Why, child, your eyes are misty as with tears,
And there's a new romance upon your face,
And either 'tis your heart, or mine, that beats
Loud as a Chinese gong.

Come ! what's amiss ?
I charge ye, tell me truly.”

So he leaned
Against the casement, and upheld his mask
To hide his changing face.

'Twas three hours since,
And yet it seems a century.

My love
Arose and buoyed me on celestial wings ;
My courage came, and so I told him all.
Ah, love, I blush to write it, but I pled

Thy cause and my cause, and at last I said :
“ If love were not so sacred utterly
Beyond all other things in human ken,
Sir, I could lay my hand in yours and say —
Blest benefactor of my father's life,
Noblest of friends, beloved gentleman,
Here do I consecrate my coming days
To you and all that makes your happiness ;
Here I redeem my grateful father's pledge,
And freely do it.

Now the lips of love
Have touched my forehead, and I am no more
Free to bestow myself upon you.

Pray,
Let me have pardon if a single pang—”

Outside a merry crew of maskers sang

A pretty barcarole, so rhythmical
Its melody seemed tingling in my veins.

My strength failed, and I sank upon a chair.
The knotted hands caressed my paling brow
A moment; then the grave voice gently said:
“ Go, child, your way in joy and peace.

My dream

Was but a dream. ’Twill vanish like a dream.
I love your father, and I love his child
Too tenderly to wrest her from her love.
Forget the idle project which had bound
Your body, not your spirit.

’Twas a dream,

A gold gleam in the mottled lump of quartz,
A vagrant thread of sunshine in the mine,

A glimpse of heaven thro' the moving mists,
A blossom in the canyon's sullen depths,
A precious memory !

Sweet child, forget !”

Those were his very words.

And next he kissed

My forehead, after which he raised his hand
As if in benediction.

“I am faint,”

He murmured : “ All this heat and masquerade
Trouble my senses. Listen, child — seek out
Your father mid the dancers ; bid him here,
While I catch breath upon yon balcony.
I hear he has been mad among the stocks
Once more, but mayhap we may save him yet.
For all I have is his — and freely given.
Go, *daughter !*”

If I live an hundred years

Never shall I forget those simple words
Embodying his final sacrifice.

* * * * * * *

When I returned, my father in my train —
Anxious for import of the interview —
We found the casement open, and we heard
The maskers troling still their barcarole.
Deep in the shadow on the balcony,
Seated upon an ancient carven bench,
My father found our friend, his whitened face
Serene and nobly upturned to the sky.
“He sleeps,” we whispered; then a bitter cry
Rang through the night, and down my father fell
Before his friend, and sobbed and wept and moaned,—
For 'twas not sleep, but Death!

'Twas three hours since,
And I am calmer now.

Ah, sweet my love,

Brave sacrifice oft cracks the heart-strings!

Lo !

The dawn which yesterday we cursed has come
With luminous and swift resistless march.
It scatters doubting darkness — fills the sky
With gorgeous tints, and thrills my very soul !
Love, from this sad place where my father mourns
For this great heart departed — from this room
Whither good Lady Lowknot sent our dead,
Nor let the joyous maskers know that Death
Had been this morn among them — from this room,
In reverent mood I come at last to thee,
My life, my lord, my joy, my only one !
Thine, thine for ever !

While these pages tell

Crudely this startling and pathetic tale,
I follow them, and in this golden dawn
Of magic Venice will I say to thee,

As once I said when all the way was dark,
And both our souls were faint :

“ I love my love :

*So let my love love me that Time, nor Chance,
Nor Fate, can e'er undo us.”*

Love, I come.

Why, so 'tis dawn, and all the sky's a gleam,
And all my being thrills with rapture! Aye,—
And so the old man's great soul went adrift
Because his dream of love was but a dream?
'Tis sad and strange:—the hand of Fate!

I hear

A footfall! Is it hers? She comes—she comes!
A fairy form in rustling draperies;—
Is it indeed thyself, my love, my own?
Oh joy to clasp thee in these faithful arms!
What? Are these tears?

The tender little face!

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

ECHOES FROM THE ORIENT;
WITH MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

NOTICES OF THE PRESS.

(ENGLISH AND AMERICAN.)

WESTMINSTER REVIEW.

“Mr. Edward King’s ‘Echoes from the Orient’ is an exceptionally good volume of verse; one of those clever volumes in which young American authors are so specially proficient. The ‘Idyl Among the Rocks’ is a very charming poem of modern Thessaly; and ‘The Ballad of Miramar’ celebrates, in graceful verse, the

melancholy career of the unhappy Maximilian, who was Emperor of Mexico for a season."

NEW YORK EVENING POST.

"Mr. King writes poetry with vigorous passion, rich imagination, and a certain simple sincerity which is not common with the poets of our time. It is to be said in his praise, and the praise is not small, that he wholly escapes the blight of fancifulness which has overtaken so many modern poets. There is not a trace, not a touch, not a suggestion in his poems of artificiality, of metrical or verbal tricks, of ingeniously devised effects, or of any affectation. He is nobly simple, earnest, and honestly fervent. His is the poetry of a strong man, moved to write by a poetic impulse too sincere for frivolities and fripperies of art. The thought, the picture, the emotion, which he would present is more to him than the method of presenting it, and such decoration as he gives to his poems is the spontaneous work of a loving hand which decorates the thought for the thought's sake, not for the sake of the decoration. He nowhere falls into the paltry habit of the time, which is to make the poetic conception a sort of peg to hang fine verbal clothes upon.

"If we emphasize this negative side of our commendation, it is not because Mr. King's poems afford no occasion for more positive praise, but because in this way we may most readily make apparent a fact of the first importance. Believing as we do that the fripperies and fine clothes of modern poetry—the excessive attention to verbal and metrical details, the little affectations of artistic attitudes, and all the rest of it—are not only hurtful, but positively destructive of genuine poetry, it seems to us to be our first duty to Mr. King to emphasize his uniform avoidance of such things. In doing so we say, more clearly than by direct assertion, that his poetry has the too rare charms of simplicity, sincerity, and manly fervour of inspiration.

"The first poem, called 'The Sorrow of Manol,' is a strangely romantic story, founded upon a Roumanian legend, of an architect who made a terrible sacrifice of love to art, in obedience to the decree of a supernal power. The second, called 'An Idyl Among the Rocks,' which is by odds the best of the poems, is a somewhat extended story told in ten brief cantos of varying form. It is by turns finely picturesque and fiercely passionate. . . 'Night in the Herzegovina' is a superb piece of descriptive work. . .

"It is a matter of rejoicing when a young man writes poetry of this manly, genuine sort, in a time when the poetic art is so commonly made a matter of mere word-mongering, when conception is trained, and expression is a thing of tricks and mechanical devices. These poems are like a blast of the fresh, wholesome outer air in a room filled with stifling perfumes."

NEW YORK NATION.

" 'Echoes from the Orient' owe a good deal, doubtless, to the romantic nature of the legends they embalm, but it is to be noticed that they do much more than show a sympathetic appreciation of these—they decorate and dignify, in careful and natural verse, the stories and sentiments which they treat. . . . 'An Idyl Among the Rocks' has greater metrical variety, and burns with local patriotism. Mr. King's sympathies with oppressed nationalities are keen, and one of the best poems in his volume is 'A Woman's Execution, Paris, 1871.' "

NEW YORK GRAPHIC.

"The distinguishing characteristics of Mr. King's versification are its freshness and simplicity, and the utter absence about it of anything like forced effects, or an attempt to make more of a theme than it naturally presents. If he errs at all in this direction it is in being too studied and restrained, in declining to make use of the legitimate ornamentation which poetry is usually thought to demand. This, however, far from weakening the effect of his

verses, really gives to them a force and strength, particularly in his descriptive passages, where he shows great power; here his realism—if we may be allowed to make a poetical application of the term—stands him in good stead, and enables him to produce pictures which are as forcible and distinct as if cut in relievo. He is withal vigorous in his expression, fervid in his imagination, and never outrages nature by strange flights or incongruous fancies. Mr. King's method, in short, is admirable; and his poems cannot help but find favor with all who appreciate true poetic feeling and an honest, manly utterance."

PHILADELPHIA LEDGER.

"His sympathy with the Roumanians, Bulgarians, and Greeks finds its fitting expressions in this little book of verses. In his 'War Contrasts,' the sonnets . . . are vivid character pieces, while the sad and awful story of the war runs through all the volumes 'The Ballad of Miramar' is a musical refrain to the memory of Maximilian and Carlotta; and the whole expression of Roumanian romance is found in a short poem called the 'Guzla.' 'A Woman's Execution' is the most spirited. . . . He can give the features and philosophy of the struggle as few other lookers-on can do. The

love sonnets, . . . few and reserved as they are, deserve a place beside the famous sonnets from the Portuguese, and show quite another vein of genius."

LONDON ACADEMY.

"Mr. King is an ardent admirer of the subject populations of the Balkan Peninsula, and his 'Echoes from the Orient' are principally devoted to eulogies of their virtues and pictures of their life. 'An Idyl Among the Rocks' has some narrative merit. The miscellaneous poems, however, seem to us to reach a higher poetical level, which is, perhaps, surprising. The first, some verses on a Pétroleuse, owes Mr. Browning royalty, but is very fair; 'Birds that Flit by Ocean's Rim,' a short song, has some of the simplicity and suggestiveness of thought, the missing of which is the fault of modern song-writing."

THE SCOTSMAN.

"In 'Echoes from the Orient,' Mr. Edward King gives us word-pictures of the scenery of European Turkey, and of its subject races, exhibiting a keen faculty of observation, and a true poet's

appreciation of the romantic and the beautiful. In spirited and graceful verse he recites Servian and Roumanian legends.... There is originality in most of his themes, and freshness and feeling in his treatment of them."

PALL MALL GAZETTE.

"To turn to the works of Mr. King, is to enter a new world and to breath a new atmosphere. Mr. King's turn of mind is at once bellicose and romantic; . . . he does his best to write like a warrior and poet. His talk is of Bosnian maids and gipsies, dwelling all night in reverie on the Roumanian plain; of patriotic brigands and sentimental Tziganes; of noble monks and heroic *communardes*; and Moslem tyrants' rocky dens. Occasionally he is a little absurd, occasionally a little dull; usually his verse is spirited and earnest, and he is quite readable. In 'Prince Lazarus' and 'The Sorrows of Manol,' his humor is narrative; he tells not ill a couple of popular legends. In 'The Fair Bosnian,' in 'An Idyl Among the Rocks,' in 'No! No!' and in 'Hola! Hola! Gossip Mine,' he essays to be dramatic."

LONDON SUNDAY FIGARO.

"'Echoes from the Orient' are a small collection of really graceful poems dealing with Eastern subjects. Their metrical

technique is very perfect, and they are instinct with fine sensibility and culture, especially that form of culture which results from wide observant travel. In these days of poetic mannerism and affectation, it is refreshing to come across simple strong verse like Mr. King's. . . . There is no strain, no bombast, no petty prettiness of expression about it. . . . Some of the best work in the volume is included among the miscellaneous poems at the end. There is a ring of Bret Harte in the poem called 'A Woman's Execution,' but, as a rule, Mr. King is quite original in manner and idea."

NEW YORK INDEPENDENT.

" . . . Whatever the occasion that incited a poetic spirit, we will be thankful that his muse was somehow set on fire. He certainly from the start excels in simple, artless style, in the fervent expression of the heart's warmest feelings, and in painting the charms of Nature on the borders of Classic-land. His lines are free from the arts of older poets, his language unaffected, and his story so simple and direct that we read with rapidity, our interest ever increasing to the end."

BALTIMORE SUN.

" . . . The local color is well preserved. All these poems indicate a high order of talent."

DERBYSHIRE TIMES.

" His volume is a charming collection of verses, having their inspiration in a journey through that strange border-land of the East, Turkey in Europe."

BOSTON TRAVELLER.

" 'The Sorrow of Manol.' . . . Mr. King has told the legend in a style indicating the true poetic fire, and at the close he rises into loftier mood, depicting the struggles of the suffering artist with considerable power. But the author, to our mind, is at his best in

those short poems wherein he embodies national aspiration, a passionate longing, or a patriotic sentiment. He has the rare faculty of attuning his lyre to every mood, of throwing his personality into the creature of the moment, and making the sentiments of another his own. 'Sweet Thessaly,' supposed to be sung by a native Greek, will indicate the charm and vigor of Mr. King's verse. . . . The range of the author's powers is shown by the stern grandeur of 'Night in the Herzegovina,' the passion-laden rhythm of 'The Ballad of Miramar,' in the plaintive beauty of 'Guzla,' and the rough jollity of 'The Danubian Gipsy's Song.' Mr. King's poetry, whatever its rank, is at least genuine, and far removed from the work of the mere versifier."

BOSTON JOURNAL.

"There are in 'Echoes from the Orient' a strength and directness, a freedom from imitation and mannerism, and a measure of self-restraint which are quite uncommon in a first book of verse. . . . Poets of the day have adopted the fashion of ornamenting their verse until little besides ornament is apparent. They delight to try their skill in dainty and difficult measures, and concentrate their energies upon form with such excellent success that they frequently omit the thoughts. To readers who are weary of simple

prettiness, who have been sung to and jingled at with all sorts of tricky measures, it brings relief to read poems like those of Mr. King, in which form—though not at all unheeded—is made secondary to thought.”

THE SPRINGFIELD REPUBLICAN.

“The first of the ‘Echoes from the Orient’ is a melancholy legend of Roumania, entitled ‘The Sorrow of Manol.’ . . . The legend must be regarded as an allegory of the supremacy of eternal art to human affection, and in this light Mr. King’s poem takes its place as a strong, unwavering narrative, sustained at a pitch of high simplicity, and culminating with unstrained effect. In the course of the story there are passages of exquisite tenderness, such as part of Manol’s appeal to the prince. . . .

“The second poem is of a lighter and more welcome sort ; it is ‘An Idyl Among the Rocks.’ It is a happy mixture of pure Greek sentiment and human love. . . .

“The characteristics of Mr. King’s verse are a sense of the poetic quality, a love of beauty, a sincerity of sentiment, and a restraint of expression. He has no tricks, no pretences, no affectations. He lacks an affluence of language ; there is a laggard air about his work at times ; he does not moralize, he does not elaborate or

adorn, he does not show any ambition for the fantastic, the curious, the malarious, or the unclean, which are the fashion nowadays. He tells his poetic tales with the simplest directness, but with a fine and true sense of their intrinsic power and of their essential quality of emotion."

SCRIBNER'S MONTHLY.

"The Orient of Mr. King's volume is that bloody debateable border-land between the forces of the Crescent and the Cross. . . . This ground was trenched upon by Sir John Bowring ; . . . others have cast their eyes upon it from time to time ; but, so far as we believe, Mr. King is the first English-writing poet who has set to work seriously to preserve its echoes in verse, and who has fitted himself to do so by journeying through the region he describes. Twenty of the thirty-one poems of which his volume is composed are devoted to them ; the longest, 'The Sorrow of Manol,' being based on a Roumanian legend, while the remainder are attempts, more or less successful, to embody the characteristic features of its landscapes, and the life of its peoples, their joys and sorrows, 'fierce wars and faithful loves ;' in a word, the elements of their national character as it is reflected in their popular folk-songs. He has been struck by what he has seen, and has produced it with a

faithfulness that has destroyed the poetic impression at which he aimed. His work is carefully wrought, but it is literal and hard. We miss the ideality which we looked for, and which must have enveloped the themes as they existed in his mind. We especially miss this quality in 'The Fair Bosnian,' who might have taken her place in literature with Wordsworth's 'Highland Girl.' 'An Idyl Among the Rocks' suggests a stormy episode of Oriental border-life. There is not much story in it, but what there is is fairly indicated, and the gleams of landscape through which it conducts us are picturesque. Quite as distinct, and much less Tennysonian, is this glimpse of 'Night in the Herzegovina.' . . . 'The Ballad of Miramar' is the best poem which the untimely fate of the Emperor Maximilian called forth. 'Prince Lazarus' is an effective rendering of a well-known Servian legend; and 'The Tzigane's Canzonet' is still better."

HARTFORD COURANT.

"The poems are Oriental in subject and feeling; but it is not the conventional Orient with which he deals; it is that new land of heroism and passion, which the late Turkish war opened to the world of literature. In his transcription of what appears to be a real legend, 'The Sorrow of Manol,' we have a narrative poem, full of power and deep with the meaning of self-sacrifice. . . . The author has wrought it out with great skill."

